

WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE

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of an Insurrectional Anarchist Project**

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WHY DEMOCRACY

It can be argued that democracy is the very heart of capitalism. Capitalism views people as equivalent in terms of the work they do - it reduces people to simple labor power. Democracy views people as equivalent in terms of voting, in terms of having an equal say in some machinery controlling you.

Here too, Justice and morality are equivalent parts of this machinery.

So why do so many anarchists embrace democracy?

-- Because being against "authority" seems to many of them to be simply being in favor of Justice, perhaps?

-- Because they haven't rejected exchange and the way that exchange can work to make people equivalent to each other.

Perhaps it is similar to what Nietzsche called the final cruelty of Christians, the need to kill God to keep the logic of religion. Many anarchists feel the need to kill the top, the boss, of a bureaucracy in order to keep the bureaucracy itself alive.

—ASAN

foremost on the level of tactics and strategies, of effectiveness in battle, our first priority should rather be to examine them in terms of whether they indeed reflect and are therefore capable of creating—not just in the future, but also here and now—our aims. Do they reflect in practice the principle of individual self-determination and the collective struggle for individual realization? Military methods involving tactical leadership are founded on chains of command, that is to say on hierarchy and obedience. As such they are in contradiction with the aims of anarchist struggle.

As I see it, the questions those involved with the black bloc need to be asking is: how do we carry out this specific method of struggle in such a way that it reflects our aims? Can this tactic be effective as a specifically anarchist tactic in the context of demonstrations? If not, then should we maybe consider the other areas of our struggle where we can continue to fight in a way where our practice reflects our aim?

The struggle against this order is the place where we can most completely implement the aims of anarchy here and now. If we give ourselves over to the domination of the strategic, to the ideology of efficiency for its own sake, we have lost what is most essential—what is left of our life. Our anarchy becomes just another political program, and not the life we desire to live here and now. I reject the sad and desperate slogan, “By any means necessary”, in favor of the principle, “Only by those means that can create the world I desire, those means that carry it in their very practice as I carry it in my heart.”

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INTRODUCTION: My Perspectives

Above all, I am an individual who desires to create my life and my relationship to the world and to other people on my own terms. This is why I am an anarchist. Therefore, my anarchist perspective is egoist and I take from all perspectives that I find useful in developing and carrying out my anarchist project.

From individualism, I take the primacy of the freedom of every individual to determine the conditions of her or his existence in free association with others as the central aim of revolutionary struggle and also a recognition of the necessity of individuals to begin to reappropriate life here and now in revolt against this society to the extent to which they are able.

My perspective is insurrectionist in that it recognizes both the necessity of the individual to rise up in open revolt against her or his condition (individual insurrection) and the necessity for a destructive, subversive rupture on the large scale with the current social order—the rising of the multitudes of the exploited and excluded classes against their condition (social insurrection).

Thus, I recognize the necessity of class analysis and an active critique of the economy. I see class struggle as the struggle against proletarianization—i.e., the struggle against our dispossession of the capacity to determine the conditions of our existence in terms of our real desires and aspirations. It manifests on the individual level in the daily acts of sabotage, theft, subversion and revolt that the exploited carry out to take back a bit of their life and dignity. The recognition of one's own struggle in the struggles of others is what begins to build the solidarity capable of transforming these individual acts into "the collective struggle for individual realization", which I see as the real class struggle.

Since this aim of freeing every individual to be able to create her or his life as s/he sees fit requires that everyone have equal access to all that is necessary for this project of self-realization, it is necessary to destroy the institutions that prevent this free access. Thus, the destruction of the institutions of property and of commodity exchange, and consequently of work—that

better coordinate black bloc activities. Unfortunately, this question has been raised without first dealing with more fundamental questions which would effect it and which I feel should not be ignored or given second place by those seeking to develop a specifically anarchist revolutionary practice. I would assume that very few if any anarchists would say that the defeat of the police in street battles is the central aim of anarchist struggle. Nor, for that matter, is the destruction of as much capitalist property as possible (as enjoyable and potentially useful as such destruction may be). Rather these are specific moments in the struggle that can certainly serve important purposes but that need to reflect the greater aim of an anarchist insurrectional project.

Yet in the articles in *Tute Nere* and *Barricada*, the questions raised are purely strategic, questions of immediate effectiveness. The greater question of what it is we are really struggling for is lost. And so the solutions brought up involve an increasing centralization and militarization of the black bloc, an embrace of "tactical" delegation and hierarchy. The writer of "The Communiqué on Tactics and Organization..." in *Barricada* even goes so far as to talk of "elected tactical facilitators" (emphasis mine) and "anarchist principles of tactical leadership" with no hint of irony. The only aim reflected is that of out-manoeuvring the police during demonstrations, as if these demonstrations represented the essence of the anarchist struggle. Putting the ideas of this communiqué into effect would transform the black bloc from a tactic taken up by individuals with those they know and trust into a formal and basically military organization. In my opinion, this would itself constitute an immediate defeat of our anarchist aims in our own practice here and now regardless of what improvements there might be in black bloc street maneuvers.

As I see it, the central aim of anarchist struggle is the subversion of existence, the reappropriation of life by each of us as individuals, the creation of our relationships on our own terms free of all domination, all hierarchy, all delegation and every chain of command, even those which claim to be merely tactical, and the destruction of everything that prevents or suppresses these possibilities. Rather than examining our practice first and

AN OPEN LETTER TO THOSE INVOLVED IN THE BLACK BLOC

The anti-globalization movement has brought with it an increase in public confrontations with those in power. Of course, anarchists have been there. One of the tactics anarchists have used in these situations is that of the black bloc. I am not interested in going into a thorough discussion of the effectiveness of this tactic or discuss its merits as an anarchist practice. Rather I want to deal with a somewhat troubling recent development that has made its appearance in discussions about the black bloc. In the Summer/September 2001 issue of *Barricada* and in the October 2001 issue of *Tute Nere* there are articles discussing the tactics of the black bloc. This is certainly not surprising, nor is it uncalled-for after two years of regular summit demonstrations as well as other demonstrations in which black bloc participants were involved. What bothers me is the direction in which the examination of the black bloc has gone.

It has been said over and over again that the black bloc is not an organization, but a tactic. The organizational framework in which it has operated has been the affinity group (or at least, the small group of friends—each such group can decide for itself to what extent to which it has made a determined effort to achieve true and deep affinity). The purpose for wearing black has been anonymity and a visual expression of solidarity not the formation of an anarchist army. I am convinced that this informality has been the real strength of this tactic, providing flexibility and leaving real choice of action in the hands of individuals in relation with others of their choosing. The tactical organization here reflects the aim of a world without delegation or hierarchy, a world where the separation between decision and action has disappeared, at least to some extent.

But the context for which the black bloc was developed and in which it has been used is that of mass street demonstrations, often involving attacks against the symbols of the state and capitalism and pitched battles with the police. It was, of course, inevitable that some would start to raise the question of how to

separation of the activity through which one gets the necessities of existence from life itself—is a necessary aim of revolutionary struggle. Only in this way can new social relations based on free association without hierarchy or privilege come to exist. This is communism as I understand it.

I recognize that the institutions of domination and exploitation are what constitute civilization, and, thus, recognize my struggle as one against civilization. Technological systems—and particularly industrialism—developed as means of controlling people, and therefore, the struggle against control is the struggle against such systems. So my perspective incorporates luddism and, in the broad sense, could be called a green anarchist perspective, though I have no use for any anti-human rhetoric, and I desire to prevent environmental destruction because a devastated world impoverishes my existence and the existence of all human beings.

Thus, I see the dichotomies made between individualism and communism, individual revolt and class struggle, the struggle against human exploitation and the exploitation of nature as false dichotomies and feel that those who accept them are impoverishing their own critique and struggle.

Wolffi Landstreicher

AGAINST BINARY THINKING

As our desire to create our lives as we see fit, to realize ourselves to the fullest extent, to reappropriate the conditions of our existence, develops into a real project of revolt against all domination and oppression, we begin to encounter the world with a more penetrating eye. Our ideas sharpen as they become tools in a life and in relationships aimed at the destruction of the social order and the opening of unknown possibilities for exploring the infinity of singular beings. With a clear aim, a resolute project of revolt, it is much easier to throw off the methods of thought imposed by this society: by school, religion, television, the media, advertising, elections, the internet—all the educational, informational and communications tools through which the ruling order expresses itself. One who has a life project, a project of revolt that motivates her activities to their depths, based on his desires and passions, not on an ideology or cause, will thus express her ideas, analyses and critiques with the assurance of one who is speaking from life, from the depths of his own being.

But where a projectual practice of revolt is lacking (and, let's be clear, I am not talking about having a bunch of random "radical" projects like an infoshop, a pirate radio station, a "Food not Bombs", etc, but of creating one's life and relationships in active revolt against the current existence in its totality), people continue to encounter the world in ways that they were taught, using the methods of thinking imposed by the current social order—this tolerant order of democratic discussion where there are two sides to every question; where we all have a choice... among the limited options offered in the marketplace of goods and of opinions, that is; where the "ideas" offered have all been separated from life, drained of all except the most instrumental passions and desires, drained of joy and sorrow and rage; where every desire is drained of its singularity and immediate content and conformed to the needs of whatever ideology and of the marketplace. There is no place here for the strong and passionate critique that springs from our desire for the fullness of life, from

quite some time, this rebellion seemed to take anarchists by surprise. The accounts treat these events in a spectacular manner as a moment separated from life and from the ongoing struggle. This is not at all surprising. Events like this tend to be unpredictable, and sometimes the apparently most politically aware have the most difficulty figuring out how to respond. Clearly we need to bring our analytical capacities and our insurrectional project into such events, but how?

It was also clear from the reports that although the formal anarchist organizations had no idea how to respond to the situation, no real initiatives to propose, they saw their task as that of educating the people in revolt, of getting their message out. But what message could these formal groups have for those who have entered the sphere of informality that is real revolt? It became increasingly clear to me as I read these reports, how important it is to pursue the self-organization of our lives, our struggles, our revolt as an ongoing movement against all formalization and institutionalization so that we will be able to encounter situations such as this not with ideologies, platforms or programs (like any politician) but with the capacity to carry out initiatives for the ongoing expansion of the self-organization of struggle that spontaneously appears in such uprisings to more and more aspects of life, aiming at the total transformation of existence.

The president then in office was compelled to step down, and the Peronists took advantage of the situation, presenting themselves as potential saviors of the nation. One of their party was appointed interim president. The Argentine secret service went out to on the streets of Buenos Aires to spread rumors to frighten people from the streets, and within a few days, things quieted down.... briefly.

Then on December 29, fed up with the lack of any real answers from the new president, a "self-convened" (i.e., autonomous—not called by any formal organization) demonstration took place in the Plaza de Mayo in front of the presidential palace. People attacked the doors of the palace. Chants included: "Everybody out, nobody stay" and "Without Peronists, without radicals, we will live better", indicating the level of disillusion with the government. When the police attempted to disperse the demonstration with tear gas, some stayed to battle the cops. Others marched to the Parliament and still others took to the streets. In the streets, people attacked banks and billboards, and at least one ruling class observer perched on the balcony of a luxury hotel received a bruise from a projectile. At the parliament, people built bonfires on the steps and looted the building, taking out furniture for barricades, bonfires and so on. When the cops used tear gas in an attempt to disperse this crowd, most instead took to the street together with the idea of going on to the supreme court. But cops armed with tear gas and rubber bullets ambushed the march. Fortunately, people in cars and on foot who sympathized with the demonstrators helped them as they retreated, blocking and attacking the cops. The next day, the interim president resigned and a few more have followed suit.

In US newspapers, this rebellion has been largely described as "middle class" (an ambiguous term, at best, when used by the US press), but reports from Argentine and the nature of the looting indicate significant involvement by the poor as well. At least one person has described the events as "bread riots". And the unrest among the unemployed and marginalized in Argentina has been going on for quite some time.

Most of the reports that I found of these events came from anarchists who were there. These accounts raise many questions. Though there has been unrest on some level in Argentina for

our awareness of the complexity of the world we face and the world we want to create, because here all ideas have been flattened into opinions and every opinion is equal—and equally empty.

And so without a project of revolt that springs from the fullness of our being and our relationships, even we anarchists find our thinking permeated with the methodology of opinion. Thus, the binary method of the public poll penetrates into the expression of so-called anarchist ideas: are you a communist or are you an individualist? do you sacrifice yourself and your desires to a moralistic "green anarchist" vision of a distant future where what is left of humanity reverts to the supposed edenic conditions of prehistoric foragers or to an equally distant "red anarchist" vision of the self-managed industrial workers' paradise? do you adhere to feminism or do you uphold male domination? The list could go on, but the point is that such binary thinking is a clear sign that one's revolt is still in the realm of morals and ideals external to oneself and thus in the realm of opinion.

To imagine a communism developed precisely to expand individual freedom and to see such freedom as flourishing in the context of that equality of access to all the tools necessary for determining the conditions of one's existence that is true communism—this is a bit complex for the world of opinion. To conceive of a critique of civilization that originates in one's desire for the fullness of being that civilization cannot offer, because its expansion can only be based on a homogenization that diminishes existence in the name of monolithic control, and to therefore envision and act to realize not a model of an ideal world, but that revolutionary rupture that opens myriads of unknown possibilities from which a new decivilized existence could develop based on our desires and dreams—this is nothing but pure egoism from the standpoint of ideology and morality. To criticize the poverty of the practice of feminism and the emptiness of so many of its theoretical constructs which have left it incapable of truly confronting and moving beyond gender because one imagines a liberation from the constraints of gender that is not homogenization into a universal androgyny but rather the opening up of the full spectrum of singular expressions of

one's being in the sexual and passionate spheres and every other sphere that gender has affected—this is pure arrogance particularly if one happens to be a man. No, it is better to keep one's thought within the constraints of offered choices, to flatten one's ideas into opinions, to not only tolerate blatant stupidity, but to blind oneself to it even among those who are supposedly our comrades, to avoid living and thinking in a projectual manner. Otherwise, one risks meeting life face-to-face and truly having to grapple with existence.

But for me revolt is not a hobby, anarchy is not a word I use to make myself feel more radical. These are my life's project, the way of being I am striving to create. The ideas I develop are not mere opinions, but the outgrowth of the passionate reason of my project, based on my life, my desires and my dreams as they encounter the world. They are as fluid as lived desires and dreams, but this fluidity is strong, assured and determined. And if, as some have said, this makes me dogmatic and arrogant, then we need more dogmatic and arrogant anarchists. Because it is not the ceaseless negotiation of opinions, of democratic discourse, that will bring down the ruling order, but the revolt of indomitable individuals who refuse to compromise themselves, coming together to destroy all domination.

REBELLION IN ARGENTINA

Argentina has been experiencing economic woes for quite some time. Over the past few years, there have been mass demonstrations of the poor and unemployed, road blockades, battles with police and so on. Already deeply in debt, the Argentine government has been seeking a loan from the IMF which has required it to institute harsh austerity measures, measures that inevitably strike those at the bottom the hardest. In the second week of December, there was a general strike. Over the next week or so, fear of economic collapse led many people to withdraw their money from the bank. So on December 19, the Economy Minister, Domingo, issued a declaration that limited bank withdrawals to \$250 a week. Of course, those most affected by this measure were those without credit, without other means to make the purchases needed to feed themselves and their families. The response was immediate.

As soon as people heard about the new measure that Domingo had enacted, road blockades went up all over the country. People began looting supermarkets and other stores, mainly for food. People battled police and attacked banks. In La Plata and Cordoba, the state houses were attacked as well. Of course, the Argentine government declared a state of emergency and outlawed all public gatherings.

On the 20th, both official left and spontaneous demonstrations continued, as did looting and attacks on banks. The unions, whose role of course depends on the continued functioning of the present social order, were afraid to agitate because the situation might "get out of their hands". But the initiative for demonstrations required no formal organization. Those who wanted to gather people simply went to street corners, clapped their hands and gathered people to demonstrate in the Plaza del Mayo. When police moved in to remove people from the plaza passersby aided the demonstrators, harassing the cops and attacking them with a variety of objects. In the course of the day people destroyed eight banks in Buenos Aires. Looting continued throughout the country.

formal basis for affinity. It seems to me that formality undermines the possibility of affinity, because it is by nature based on a predetermined, and therefore arbitrary, commonality. Formal organization is based upon an ideological or programmatic unity that ultimate comes down to adherence to the organization as such. Differences must be swept aside for the cause of the organization, and when differences are swept aside, so also are dreams, desires, aspirations and passions since these can only ever belong to the individual. But, in fact, formal organization has nothing to do with intention or projectuality. In fact, by providing an ideology to adhere to it relieves the individual of the responsibility of thinking for herself and developing his own understanding of the world and of her struggle in it. In providing a program, it relieves the individual of the necessity of acting autonomously and making practical analyses of the real conditions in which she is struggling. So, in fact, formality undermines projectuality and the capacity for self-organization and so undermines the aim of anarchist struggle.

Relationships of affinity are the necessary basis of self-organization on the most basic daily level of struggle and of life. It is the deep and growing knowledge of one another that provides the basis for developing projects of revolt that truly reflect our own aspirations and dreams, for developing a shared struggle that is based in the recognition and, at its best, the passionate enjoyment of our very real and beautiful differences. The development of social revolution will, of course, require an organizing of activity beyond the range of our relationships of affinity, but it is the projects that we develop from these relationships that give us the capacity for self-organization, the strength to refuse all formality and, thus, all of the groups that claim to represent the struggle, whether they call themselves parties, unions or federations. In the relationship of affinity, a new way of relating free from all roles and every hackneyed social relationship already begins to develop, and with it an apparent unpredictability that the authorities will never understand. Here and now, we grasp a world of wonder and joy that is a powerful weapon for destroying the world of domination.

THE TECHNIQUE OF CERTAINTY

by
Marco Beacco

*"I was frightened to find myself
in the void, I myself a void.
I felt like I was suffocating,
considering and feeling
that everything is void,
solid void."*

—Giacomo Leopardi

The metaphor of "mental illness" dispossesses the individual of whatever is most unique and personal in her way of life, in his method of perceiving reality and herself in it; this is one of the most dangerous attacks against the singular, because through it the individual is always brought back to the social, the collective, the only "healthy" dimension in existence.

The behavioral norms that regulate the human mass become absolute, the "deviant" act that follows a different logic is tolerated only when stripped of its peculiar "meaning", of the particular "rationality" that underlies it. Reasons connect only to collective acts, which can be brought back, if not to the codes of the dominant culture, to those of various ethnic, antagonist and criminal subcultures that exist. The sharing of meanings, symbols and interpretations of reality thus appears as the best antidote to madness.

Thus if one who suddenly kills his family is a lunatic, or better, a "monster", one who sets fire to a refuge for foreigners appears as a xenophobe (at most, from the method, a bit hasty, but still within reason) and one who slaughters in the situation of a declared war is nothing but a "good soldier".

Thus, according to the classifying generalization that makes them all alike, expropriating them of their lived singularity, lunatics are "dangerous to society". Truthfully, one can only agree with this, certainly not because of the supposed and pretextual aggressivity and violence attributed to those who suffer psychiatric diagnosis (the psychiatrists and educators of

every sort are undoubtedly much more dangerous), but because they have violated, knowingly or not, the essentially quantitative codes that constitute normality. What is surprising is that after long years of domestication there is anybody who does not respond to cultural stimuli, if not quite automatically, at least in a highly predictable manner. Unpredictability is the source of the greatest anxiety for every society and its guardians, since it is often the quality of the individual; no motive, no value, no purpose that is socially comprehensible, only an individual logic, necessarily abnormal.

Defense from this danger is entrusted to the proclamations of science. In other words, the "unhealthy" gesture, the creator of which is not responsible, remains as a consequence of an external misfortune that could strike and give rise to thousands of people like him. The mechanism is therefore well contrived, a gesture deprived of meaning, of an underlying will, becomes innocuous, and it is easy to neutralize it, along with its creator, behind the alibi, which is "social" as well, of the cure.

The psychiatric diagnosis comes down on the individual like an axe, amputating her language, his meaning, her life paths; it claims to eliminate them as irrational, senseless, the psychiatrist behaves before them with the liquidating attitude of one who transforms the experiences of life into malfunctions of the psyche, the emotions into a malignant tumor to be removed.

Psychiatrists, as technicians of certainty, are the most efficient police of the social order. Reality, like the meaning of existence, has clear and unequivocal boundaries for these priests in white shirts; their mission: to "return" those who have gotten lost venturing onto the winding paths of nonsense "to their senses".

If the police are limited, as is claimed, to beating you, the psychiatrist demands to hear you say, "Thank you, I am well now" as well.

The focal point in the discussion is not in the four walls and the bars of the asylum, nor in the electroshock and constraint beds, nor in bad as opposed to good psychiatry, but in "psychiatric thought" itself, in the form of thinking of anyone who addresses himself to different subjects with the clinical eye of diagnosis, always looking for the symptoms of a pathology in them, in

of what we are fighting for if we are, indeed, fighting to take back our lives, to reappropriate the capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence—i.e., the capacity for self-organization.

The development of relationships of affinity is specifically the development of a deep knowledge of one another in a complex manner, a profound understanding of each other's ideas, dreams, desires, passions, aspirations, capacities, conceptions of the struggle and of life. It is, indeed a discovery of what is shared in common, but more significantly it is a discover of differences, of what is unique to each individual, because it is at the point of difference that one can truly discover the projects one can carry out with another.

Since the development of relationships of affinity is itself a reflection of our aims as anarchists and since it is intended to create a deep and ever-expanding knowledge of one another, it cannot simply be left to chance. We need to intentionally create the opportunity for encounters, discussions and debates in which our ideas, aspirations and visions of the revolutionary struggle can come into contention, where real affinities and real conflicts can come out and be developed—not with the aim of finding a unifying middle ground in which every one is equally compromised, but to clarify distinctions and so discover a real basis for creating projects of action that aren't simply playing the role of radical, activist or militant, but that are real reflections of the desires, passions and ideas of those involved. While publications, internet discussion boards and correspondence can provide means for doing this on some levels, to the extent to which they are open forums they tend to be too random, with potential for the discussion to lose any projectuality and get sidetracked into the democratic exchange of opinions which have little connection to one's life. To my mind, the best and most significant discussions can take place in face-to-face encounters between people with some clarity of why they are coming together to discuss. Thus, organizing discussion groups, conferences, meetings and the like is an integral part of the development of relations of affinity and so of projects of action.

The necessity to pursue the development of relationships of affinity with intention does not mean the development of a

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS OF AFFINITY

"Today the spirit drowns in a mass of chance encounters. We are looking for those who are still alive enough to support each other beyond this; those fleeing Normal Life."

—Against Sleep and Nightmare

We live in a society in which most of our encounters have already been defined in terms of predetermined roles and relationships in which we have no say. A randomness devoid of surprise surrounds the scheduled torment of work with a "free time" lacking in joy, wonder or any real freedom to act on one's own terms, a "free time" not so very different from the job from which it is supposed to be a respite. Exploitation permeates the whole of existence as each of our interactions is channeled into a form of relating that has already been determined in terms of the needs of the ruling order, in order to guarantee the continued reproduction of a society in which a few control the conditions of everyone's existence and so own all of our lives.

So the revolt against our exploitation is not essentially a political or even an economic struggle, but a struggle against the totality of our current existence (and so against politics and economy), against the daily activities and interactions imposed on us by the economy, the state and all the institutions and apparatus of domination and control that make up this civilization. Such a struggle cannot be carried out by any means. It requires a method of acting in and encountering the world in which new relations, those of free individuals who refuse to be exploited and dominated and equally refuse to dominate or exploit, manifest here and now. In other words, our struggle must be the immediate reappropriation of our lives, in conflict with the present society.

Starting from this basis, the refusal of formality and the development of relations of affinity cannot be seen in merely tactical or strategic terms. Rather, they are reflections in practice

order to annul the difference with a "therapy" that brings them back to being more like us.

If the real purpose of the "new places" of psychiatry was that of stimulating creativity, individual growth, liberating communication and developing the capacity for relations, they would not be "psychiatric" or "therapeutic/rehabilitative" places, but probably ideal places for everyone, places of freedom. The problem is that these places are nothing but ghettos in which one does not find individuals interacting on the level of mutuality, but rather two "categories" of persons in asymmetrical positions: the professionals and the clients, the healthy and the diseased, those who help and those who are helped; in these places, the healthy try to persuade the diseased that what they did and thought up to that time was wrong, or rather "unhealthy", and through the "joyful" method of the encounter group, of dance, theatre and music...lead them toward the binaries of normality.

The "autonomy" and "self-realization" about which these democratic operators flap their tongues are exclusively their own and, to them, it is necessary to conform in order to be able to leave the healing enclosure. Psychiatric medicine itself, as analgesic (anesthetic) for the mind, is the sign of the attempt to block every development, every pathway however painful at times, that an individual puts into action as a reaction to that which oppresses her. Without mystifying this process, this moment of "crisis", that is not necessarily a pathway to liberation, the fact of the matter remains that the answer of power is generalized narcosis, collective stupefaction, that renders us static and tranquil, anchored to our placid misery.

INTRODUCTION TO DROP EVERYTHING

by

Annie LeBrun

Translated from the French by Guy Ducomet

[This piece first appeared in English in the book, *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, edited by Penelope Rosemont. It is a translation of the introduction of Annie LeBrun's book, *Lachez Tout* (Drop Everything), a merciless critique of what she calls "neofeminism"—what most of us here know simply as feminism—written in 1977. Annie LeBrun was born in Rennes, France in 1942. She was involved with the surrealist movement—which is more a revolutionary movement than an art movement—between 1963 and 1969, and has continued to be involved in creative projects of revolt since.]

I have a horror of not being misunderstood.

—Oscar Wilde

At sixteen, I decided my life would not be as others intended it to be. This determination—and perhaps luck—allowed me to escape most of the misfortune inherent in the feminine condition. Rejoicing that young women today increasingly manifest their desire to reject the models heretofore offered them, I, nonetheless, deplore their seeming readiness to identify with the purely formal negation of these old-fashioned models, that is, when they do not settle for simply bringing them back into fashion. At a time when everyone complacently intones that one is not born a woman but one *becomes* a woman, hardly anyone seems to trouble herself about *not* becoming one. Indeed, it's just the opposite. Contrary to the efforts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminists who endeavored to eliminate the illusory difference that gave men real power over women, the neofeminists of recent years have made it their business to

replaced by self-control and self-regulation of productive times and rhythms as a function of the choice of objectives, which is still determined by the bodies that manage productive unity. But these decisions might later be submitted to a democratic decision from below, asking the opinion of individuals employed in the various production units with the aim of implanting the process of self-management.

We are speaking of "suitable synchronism", not realized once and for all, but dealt with time and again, for single productive periods or specific production campaigns and programs, with the aim of creating a convergence of interest of interests between workers and employers, a convergence to be realized not only on the technical terrain of production, but also on the indirect plane of solicitation of some claim to the demand, which is to say, on the plane of the market.

In fact, it is really in the market that two movements within the new productive flexibility are joined together. The old factory looked to itself as the center of the productive world and its structures as the stable element from which to start in order to conquer ever-expanding sections of consumption to satisfy. This would indirectly have to produce a worker-centered ideology, managed through guidance by a party of the sort called proletarian. The decline of this ideological-practical perspective could not be more evident today, not so much because of the collapse of real socialism, and all the direct and indirect consequences that followed from this and continue to grow out of it, but in reality, due to the productive changes which we are discussing. There is thus no longer a distinction between the rigidity of production and the chaotic and unpredictable flexibility of the market. Both these aspects are now brought back under the common denominator of variability and streamlining. The greater ability to penetrate into consumption, whether foreseeing and soliciting it or restraining it, allows the old chaos of the market to be transformed into an acceptable, if not entirely predictable, flexibility. At the same time, the old rigidity of the world of production has change into the new productive speed. These two movements are coming together in a new unifying dimension on which the economic and social domination of tomorrow will be built.

For this reason, the reduction of the costs of production is now entrusted not only to the cost of labor, as has occurred in the past several years as a consequence of massive telematic replacement, but also to a rational management of so-called productive redundancy. In short, a ruthless analysis of waste, from whatever point of view, and, first of all, from the perspective of production times. In this way, by a variety of means, productive pressure is exercised once again on the producer in flesh and blood, dismantling the ideology of containment on the basis of which an easing of the conditions of suffering and exploitation that have always been characteristic of wage labor was credited to telematic technology.

The reduction of waste thus becomes the new aim of streamlined production, in its time based on the flexibility of labor already consolidated and the productive potentiality guaranteed by the telematic coupling as its starting point. And this reduction of waste falls entirely on the back of the producer. In fact, the mathematical analysis realized through complex systems already in widespread use in the major industries can easily solve the technical problems of contractors, which is to say, those relative to the combination of raw materials and machinery, in view of maintenance. But the solution to these problems would remain a marginal matter to production as a whole if the use of production time were not also placed under a regime of control.

Thus, the old Taylorism comes back into fashion, though now it is filtered through the new psychological and computing technologies. The comprehensive flexibility of large industry is based on a sectoral flexibility of various components, as well as on the flexibility of the small manufacturers that peripherally support the productive unity of command. Work time is thus the basic unity for the new production; its control, without waste but also without stupidly repressive irritations, remains the indispensable connection between the old and new productive models.

These new forms of control have a pervasive nature. In other words, they tend to penetrate into the mentality of the individual producer, to create general psychological conditions so that little by little external control through a timetable of production is

establish the reality of that difference in order to claim an illusory power that women are said to have been denied. So thoroughly do they work at establishing the reality of this illusive difference that in the end, the revolt against *impossibility of being* tends to vanish under the blows of militant stupidity, thus introducing the *obligation to be*. Do we forever need to remind ourselves that in matters of revolt, we need no ancestors? And definitely, *no* technical advisers eager to exchange their recipes for feminine insubordination from A to Z.

In view of the extent of the crimes more or less legally perpetrated, not only against women but also against all those who refuse the social codification of sexual roles (homosexuals in particular), this revolt can only be regarded as urgent—so urgent that I cannot refrain from disrupting the chorus of those, male or female, who claim they are abstracting it from the private obscurity where it violently takes shape, and from whence it draws its overwhelming strength. I insist: this rebellion is always directed against the collective morale, no matter upon what bases the collectivity was founded. How, then, can we fail to see that today every woman will be dispossessed of the recovery of her self if she does not notice that every one of her tirades might be redirected and used to build an ideology as contradictory in its proposals as it is totalitarian in its intentions? We even find her tacitly encouraged on all sides to reveal the claims of her sex, ever since the so-called “women’s cause” was presented as the image of a rebellion tamed inside the net of the negative normalization that our epoch is so proficient at casting over the most remote spaces on the horizon.

Having always disdained masters who act like slaves as well as slaves eager to slip into the skins of masters, I confess that the ordinary conflicts between men and women have been of very little concern to me. My sympathy goes rather to those who desert the roles that society assigns them. Such people never claim to be constructing a new world, and therein lies their fundamental honesty: they never impose their notion of well being on others. With a powerful determination that can often overturn the established order, they are just happy to be the exceptions that negate the rule.

Oscar Wilde interests me more than any bourgeoisie woman who agreed to marry and have children, and then, one fine day, suddenly feels that her oh so hypothetical creativity is being frustrated.

And that's how it is.

I shall not list my preferences in this regard: it would be useless to do so, and extremely discouraging for the cause of women.

The fact that I have done my best as far as possible, to avoid biological destiny's psychic, social and intellectual hold upon me is my own business, but I shall never give in to society's attempt to make me feel guilty in the name of all women and to force me back into the limitation's of that destiny. Such sudden and inexorable promiscuity in search of each woman's identity indeed threatens women at the very heart of their freedom when the gender difference is asserted at the expense of all other specific differences. Let us just consider calmly what we have *all* had to endure in the name of God, Nature, Man and History. It seems, however, that all of that was not enough, for it is all starting up again under the banner of Woman. Specialists in coercion make no mistake when with sudden zeal they increase the numbers of national and international organizations dealing with "la condition feminine" without actually effecting any legislative change. And they can hardly go very far astray, since the moment when Louis Aragon, that choirboy for repression for almost half a century, announced that woman is "Man's Future". I have the gravest doubts about a future that might look anything like Elsa Triolet.¹

In all that is said and written in the name of woman, I see the return—under the pretext of liberation—of everything that has traditionally diminished women. They denounce the family but exalt motherhood as the foundation of the family. They attack the notion of woman-as-object but promote the revival of "feminine mystery". And the exposure of the relationships between men and women as power relations initiates theories about the most sickening and inane conjugal squabbles. For me

STREAMLINED PRODUCTION

by
Alfredo Bonanno

Among the various characteristics of the last several years, the failure of global automation in the factories (understood in strict sense) must be pointed out, a failure caused by the failure of the prospects and, if you will, the dreams of mass production.

The meeting between the telematic and traditional fixed production (harsh assembly lines later automated up to a certain point with the introduction of robots) has not developed toward a perfecting of the lines of automation. This is not due to problems of a technical nature, but due to problems of an economic nature and of the market. The threshold of saturation for technologies that can replace manual labor has not been exceeded; on the contrary there are always new possibilities opening in this direction. Rather, the strategies of mass production have been surpassed, and have thus come to have little importance for the economic model of maximum profit.

The flexibility that the telematic guaranteed and has steadily made possible in the phase of the rise of post-industrial transformation at a certain point caused such profound changes in the order of the market, and thus of the demand, as to render the opening that the telematic itself had made possible or rather put within reach useless. Thus, the flexibility and ease of production is moved from the sphere of the factory into the sphere of the market, causing a standstill in the telematic development of automation, and a reflooding of new prospects for an extremely diversified demand that was unthinkable until a few years ago.

If one reads the shareholders' reports of some of the great industries, it becomes clear that automation is only sustainable at increasing costs that quickly become anti-economical. Only the prospect of social disorder of a great intensity could still drive the financially burdensome path of global automation.

¹ Louis Aragon was involved with the original surrealist group until he converted to Stalinism. Elsa Triolet was his wife. (editor's note)

But the state could not exist without the men and women that embody it and make it function; And such men and women are made of flesh and blood like everyone else. They live in houses that are more or less distant from ours; they eat like us and have interests and feelings like all of us.

It's just that their interests coincide with "the interests of the state".

So when the interests of the state, of justice, of laws are the interests of those who command, those who hold capital, those who are privileged in whatever manner and portray their own interests as "the interests of all".

But what interests could those who command and those who are forced to obey, those who own everything and those who have nothing, those who slaughter and those who are slaughtered, masters and slaves, the robbers and the robbed have in common?

Nothing! They have nothing in common!

And then? And then what everyone does is in his or her own interests, without appealing to what's fair, much less to justice.

Everyone lives the life they choose to live: there are those who live in subordination, exploitation, submission, material and spiritual poverty who want to remain there or hope that things will change on their own to create a better life; and there are those who rebel against the institutions and against those who try to impose their will on everyone else; there are those who overturn, who relate to a better idea.

Thus this is a world at war and the first to lose are the indifferent.

And the others?

The others win everything, because each of them has chosen to stake her existence in the way he desires: those on the side of power, of capital, of the state, of laws and of "justice"; or those on the side of the dignity of every person, who could freely dispose of themselves only in dignity.

these are just so many more reasons to be glad that I have turned my back on the *dead-ends* of so-called "feminine sensibility". Moreover, nothing could make me alter my natural aversion to majorities, especially when they are composed of part-time martyrs—largely a phenomenon of the western world.

The more deafening the noise of our time, the more I feel certain that my life is elsewhere, gliding along my love whose shapes entomb the passing of time. I look at you. We shall meet on the bridge of transparency before diving into the night of our differences. We shall swim near to one another at a distance, tense or distracted, going against the stream of our enigma to find ourselves in the uncertain embrace of our fleeting shadows. We are not the only ones to have encountered a point of transparency before plunging into the night of our differences and who have come up not caring whether we are male or female. And if very few men find it easy to recognize themselves in Francis Picabia's avowal, "Women are the agent of my freedom," it is perhaps because that comes only with the triumph of a *Marvellous* that men and women have yet to discover. That is why I object to being enrolled in an army of women engaged in struggle simply because of a biological accident. My frantic individuality is exactly in proportion to all that strives toward the interchangeability of all beings.

This book is a call for desertion.

A NEW ENCLOSURE

After all, it is the 21st century. We must think of our image above all—especially in a tourist town like Orlando, Florida, suburb of Disney World. So something has to be done about those scruffy looking homeless people. They litter the sidewalks with their presence, perpetually reminding everyone that this isn't the magic kingdom, that maybe it's something a little bit closer to hell for many. And that, furthermore, the precariousness that is made evident by their presence is not so distant from most other workers in the present order, even from a number of the tourists who come to anesthetize themselves on the consumer illusions Disney has to offer.

But the city officials of Orlando are good people, charitable people. In this world in which nearly every space is already ruled by the state and the economy, new enclosures often take the form of the exclusion of undesirables from what is apparently the "common space". But the good-hearted lawmakers of this city compromised—after all, panhandlers have their "right to free speech". To clean up Orlando's public image while granting panhandlers their freedom to ask others for money that is guaranteed to them under the first amendment, the city has instituted a law requiring panhandlers (who are already required to register with the city) to exercise their trade only within specially designated panhandling zones—small rectangles painted on the sidewalks with blue borders in which one must stay while panhandling. If one panhandles outside of these designated zones one may be arrested.

THE GLOBAL LABORATORY

When attacks have been made against experiments involving genetically engineered plants, the researchers will sometimes cry that those taking such actions are preventing them from testing the possible environmental effects of these organisms. They argue, oh so reasonably, that only by testing these engineered organic machines can we know what effects they would have, and in a democracy such information is necessary so that the public can make wise choices. Of course, we are not to consider who pays these researchers. The corporate money may be once or twice removed when it is university research, but it is nonetheless the basis for these experiments.

But more significantly, the laboratory for these experiments is not an enclosed sterile room from which nothing can escape, but rather, open fields and tree farms—and therefore, the earth itself. It is already well known that genetically engineered material is carried in pollen and spreads outside the area of the experimental field. The incidents of this have become numerous. When one considers that what is being engineered into these organisms is often deadly to other life, this becomes truly frightening. Experiments with the creation of sterile plants (the only purpose of which is to guarantee seed monopolies to large corporations) have been going on for several years, and if Monsanto claims that they have ceased to be involved in creating this terminator technology, this does not guarantee that there has been no leakage into the environment yet.

But the use of the earth as a laboratory is nothing new. The whole history of industrial development is one vast experiment to see how far the rulers can go in their attempt to extract

conditions of existence that have been imposed on us. This project ultimately requires the active revolt of the multitudes of exploited and excluded people, as well as those on the margins resisting the efforts of capitalist institutions to steal their lives from them. But unless one has faith in some form of historical determinism or spontaneism, there is no sense in simply sitting back and waiting until "the time is ripe" and the multitudes rise.

Our activity creates the circumstances in which insurrection can flower; our refusal to obey, our insistence upon creating our lives as our own against all odds here and now and attacking the institutions of domination and exploitation as we confront them in our lives are the seeds of revolution. If revolution is the collective struggle for individual realization (and this seems to me to be the most consistently anarchist understanding of the term) and, thus, against proletarianization, then it develops with the solidarity that grows between individuals in revolt as they recognize their struggle in the struggles of others. For this reason, and for the joy it gives me here and now, I will not wait until the time is ripe, but will begin to take my life back here and now.

It should come as no surprise that these zones are generally located on blocks of empty storefronts, in front of government buildings and by empty lots—areas of downtown guaranteed to have minimal foot traffic. After all, the first priority is to present a clean public image, to hide this indication of the real nature of our social order. While the sidewalks are apparently common space, they have, in fact been the space of commodity exchange for a long time. Thus, capitalism has no need to enclose this space, but rather needs to enclose those undesirables who drift into it in increasing numbers as the system excludes more and more people from even the bottom rung of its order, to limit their movements and make them increasingly invisible. While prisons, asylums and refugee camps take care of some of this problem, there are always those who have no place, who cannot simply be put away. So for these, more laws, more restriction of movement and of activity, the enclosure of their already desperate lives into an increasingly constricted physical and psychic space.

The humiliation of the life of one who the social order has excluded, forced into a life of petty scams, begging or the precarity of day labor is already an irritation rubbing against the grain of human dignity. This enclosure within this blue-bordered unwallled prison is a further aggravation that demands the response of revolt.

ON DISPOSSESSION AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Due to the immensity of the current social order and the facelessness of the bureaucratic and technological systems through which it maintains its power, one can easily come to see it as inevitable, as a predetermined system of relationships in which we have no choice but to play our role. The aim of the state and the ruling class is total domination over all of existence, and here in the heart of this monster it can seem as though they have, indeed, achieved this aim. Aren't we forced, day after day, to engage in activities and relationships not of our choosing?

This is what defines us as proletarians. We have been dispossessed of our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence. But this dispossession is not an inevitable and predetermined historical development. Right now, at the fringes of the capitalist order, in places like Bougainville and West Papua, one can see how this dispossession takes place. Individuals with names and face, the institutions they establish in order to exercise their power and those who choose to obey them due to the extortion of survival act with violence to dispossess those who still have some freedom to create their lives on their own terms. And in the face of these violent intrusions, those who have not yet been proletarianized often take up arms against those who are trying to steal their lives from them. It is not an inevitable historical process that is—often literally—bulldozing their lives into the ground, but the force of arms of those in

power. Real individuals are responsible for the social conditions that exist. Real individuals benefit from them and, thus, do everything in their power to expand them.

But it is not just the activities of those who rule that reproduce the current order of domination and exploitation, but also—and more essentially—the activity of those who obey them. Here, in the heart of the beast, our dispossession seems to be complete. Unlike West Papuans and the people of Bougainville, we have no social life of our own creating. Every choice we make is made under duress, the extortion of survival's domination over life hanging over our heads like a sword. Nonetheless, obedience is a choice. The mutinous activities in the American military that played a major role in forcing US withdrawal from Vietnam is proof enough of this, as are the little acts of insubordination carried out everyday by the exploited to make their lives a little bit more bearable, a little bit more dignified. And it is in such acts that one begins to take responsibility for one's life.

The social order of the state and capital leaves us very few options. One can understand when some, like Daniel Quinn, suggest that we "just walk away", but against a system that requires expansion this is no solution. If the mountain people of West Papua have been forced to take up arms against the intrusion of the civilized order, we who live in its heart can't pretend that we can simply run away. If we do not want to accept our exploitation and choose obedience with the occasional petty transgression, then we are forced to live outside the law, quite literally to try to steal our lives back as best we can against all odds.

Increasingly, a similar life is being forced upon more and more of people. The multitudes of tribal and peasant peoples being forced off the lands where they made their lives do not find jobs waiting for them in the cities to which they are forced to migrate. And even in the affluent nations of the North, many people find themselves falling out the bottom. The only place for these people is the realm of the illegal economy, the so-called "black market". But this is still the market, these people are still exploited and here survival still reigns over life.

For anarchists and revolutionaries, the issue is not mere survival, but the reappropriation of life, the overturning of the